

**MEMORIAL DAY REMARKS**  
**MAYOR SCOTT W. LANG**  
**May 25, 2009**

Welcome all veterans and families of veterans and all citizens of the City of New Bedford. Today, we continue our national observance which remembers the men and women who have died in service to our country. We remember those who have worn the colors of our armed forces and have fought under our flag. One hundred forty-one years ago, in 1868, Decoration Day was proclaimed by General John Logan in his position as the National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic. The purpose of Decoration Day was to adorn the graves of the soldiers, sailors and marines who had lost their lives fighting in the Civil War. The practice of observing a day to honor those who had died, actually began in many of the cities and towns throughout the North and South during the Civil War. By the late 1800's Decoration Day had become known as Memorial Day, to honor all men and women who have died fighting for our country.

Among the veterans who are in attendance today are the men and women who have served our country in World War II, the Korean war, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, the War on Terror and all other military campaigns or sorties that the United States has undertaken since the end of World War II.

Since the beginning of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States has lost 4,960 sons and daughters. Our immediate area has lost 5 young men. In New Bedford, we lost Joseph Camara and Michael Ford. In Dartmouth, we lost Peter Enos; in Fairhaven, we lost Patrick Gallagher and in Freetown, we recently lost Tyler Trahan.

Please pray for these men and their families and pray for all of the men and women who have lost their lives in preserving our liberty.

It is especially fitting that we gather on this Memorial Day in front of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. This monument is a classic Civil War Monument. Three thousand two hundred New Bedford men fought in the Civil War, and two hundred seventeen men lost their lives; their names are inscribed within the foundation. New Bedford's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument was one of the first to commemorate the Union's Civil War effort, and cost Thirteen thousand three hundred dollars to construct. Its cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1866 by Mayor John H. Perry, the City's 8<sup>th</sup> Mayor, only 15 months after the assassination of President Lincoln and only 13 ½ months after the final surrender of the South. Mayor Perry spoke eloquently when he addressed the crowd after laying the cornerstone. Mayor Perry's words were as follows:

*"Gentlemen of the City Council and friends here assembled, I have the honor to report that the cornerstone of the soldiers' and sailors' monument is correctly laid and rests in proper position.*

*Let me assure you, this to me, is a solemn and interesting occasion. You are not here at this time to celebrate battles fought or victories won; not here to rejoice over the achievements of your arms or to exult over the defeat of your enemies. The duties of the hour are far more noble, holy and impressive. You are here to honor the brave, to take part in the erection of a monument consecrated to the memory and honor of those brave men who went out from among you to battle for their country's cause. They return no more. They went forth by land and by sea to sustain the declaration of*

*independence, to the reading of which you have just listened; and of which today is the ninetieth anniversary. They went forth to perpetuate that glorious independence and freedom so dearly purchased with their lives and fortunes of your fathers. They went forth for the glory and honor of their country, for the protection of your homes and liberties. They did not live to witness the glorious success of their comrades in arms or the return of peace and prosperity to their beloved country. They are gone from home—passed away. As there is a just God, their names are enrolled on high. They sleep a sweet, an eternal peace.*

*They are dead. Their country lives; may the blessings of peace, independence and liberty, be here forever."*

The orator for the occasion was Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, the Chaplain of the Second Massachusetts Regiment. The day was marked by a memorable ceremony with school children, bands, veterans and citizens, some on horseback, all in attendance and participating in various degrees. Rev. Quint gave a speech lasting approximately one hour, which had many highlights regarding personal sacrifice and the call to duty. One of his more notable statements is as true today as when he wrote it 143 years ago this July 4<sup>th</sup>. Reverent Quint said it in his remarks:

*"But it is more than reverence for deeds of daring which this stone shall commemorate, and other duties than respect for the dead, which this stone shall pledge. Men pass away, but principles never. The laws of right are eternal, while officials and leaders are as the grass that perishes. Deeds outlive marble and truths outlive deeds. Unless the principles for which these men died are observed and carried*

*onward, they died in vain. This tribute to their memory is the pledge of devotion to their work, and of the determination that the work shall have its glorious consummation."*

*In closing, he said, "Here where you raise this monument, swear to be true. True to the right; true to the flag; true to the country; true to humanity; true to God, true to your memory; true to the deeds; true to the blood of your dead heroes.*

*Here on this sunrise slope, and looking to the free waters, let this column rise. Here when old men come to rest, let them dwell on the memories of the dead sons. Here when young men and maidens linger in the evening air, let them remember the heroic men who did their duty and did it well. Here, when the children play on the grassy sod, let them reverently drink in the inspiration of this silent stone, and know that they owe to their country their hearts and their hands. Here, when the childless and the widow come to weep, let them feel that their heroes did not die in vain. Here where the orphan stays to look at the memorial of his father, let him learn to be as heroic, as noble and as true."*

Throughout our history, the cause of conflict may vary, but the degree of commitment, bravery, selflessness and sacrifice is the same in the young men and women of today, as it has been in every other military campaign in which our country has been involved. The young men and women who serve, and their families, define the tremendous strength of our American fabric.

New Bedford is proud to honor our veterans with today's parade. We show our appreciation by the throngs of spectators along the route, and through your attendance here today, as well as your good thoughts and deeds towards veterans and families throughout the year.

New Bedford's patriotic spirit of 1866 lives on today in its citizens who observe this 141<sup>st</sup> Declaration/Memorial Day. Let us pass on this faithful allegiance to America to our children and grandchildren.

Thank you.